

TRAUMA WORKSHOPS FROM KENYA

In September 2008 130 AVP facilitators from 21 countries gathered in Kakamega, Kenya for the biennial AVP-International Gathering. Following the conference, many of us attended AVP and HROC (Healing and Rebuilding Our Community) workshops across Kenya, experiencing the pain of a country recovering from the terrible violence that swept much of the country after the recent elections.

I was privileged to share in a workshop in a rural village that bordered the tribal areas of the Kikuyu and the Kalujin – the two largest tribes in Kenya. Forty three homes there had been razed to the ground, one woman was killed and much livestock and other valuables were stolen or destroyed.

Thirteen representatives from each tribe were participants. Many of them had lost their homes and property in the violence and were now living in tents. Attending also were several chiefs, senior officials from the area including a woman who was the local member of parliament.

As the workshop progressed we saw that men and women who would not talk to one another were now eating and sharing together. People shared their fear, their bitter anger, their pain and their shattered hopes. They shared how families had been torn apart because husband and wife belonged to different tribes, how children who were best friends were banned from speaking to each other. By the time we reached the second day of the workshop we watched as members of the community pledged to rebuild lost homes, try to replace or restore property and to rebuild relationships that had broken apart. Wow!

by John Michaelis
AVP Sydney & AVP Seattle
October 2008